

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKU #0088/01 0321145
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 011145Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4510
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000088

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/RA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [IR](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES IRANIAN NUCLEAR CONCERNS WITH
KUWAIT

REF: A. STATE 9124
[1](#)B. 09 KUWAIT 1112
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 61

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and
d

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador, during a January 31 luncheon in honor of Tony Blair at the residence of Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al Sabah, pulled aside Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah and raised ref A points concerning Iran's nuclear program, continuing USG concerns, and our efforts to address Tehran's intransigence, which now require greater application of international pressure. Ambassador also noted Washington interest in Kuwait's recent high-level diplomatic engagement with Iran (PM's visit in November -- ref B), Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Larijani's visit in January (Ref C and septel), and reports of a possible Amiri visit later this Spring, as well as efforts to expand commercial ties, including oil/gas deals on the continental shelf (septel) -- and said that enhanced bilateral cooperation to align our strategies would be welcome. The FM took the points on board, but declined to be drawn out further on Kuwait's strategy for dealing with Iran.

[1](#)2. (C) Earlier at the same event, Ambassador raised reftel points with the FM's Office Director, Shaykh Dr. Ahmad Naser Al Sabah (Note: also the Prime Minister's son. End Note), who asked whether the Iranian side had committed "in writing" to the Tehran reactor fuel swap, the Qom facility inspection and the follow-on meeting of P5 1. Shaykh Dr. Ahmed suggested that the two critical issues are whether Iran's nuclear program is now so widespread as to be for practical purposes unstoppable -- and whether Tehran has or is close to having the actual wherewithal to construct a nuclear device. Ambassador replied that we are aware of at least three reactors, but said the issue of capability was more difficult to judge -- technical know-how had to be combined with all the various necessary physical components, and there would need to be a political decision to proceed. She emphasized that the President's hand is still outstretched to Iran, but at some point Iran will have to face the consequences of its recalcitrance; moreover, the President was walking a carefully considered fine line in dealing with others who wished to take actions we hoped to avoid.

[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Ahmad took Ambassador's point and noted that a year or two ago, many in Kuwait hoped a silent, targeted strike would take out the troublesome reactor and leave the region more relaxed. He suggested that now, however, Iran might have multiple reactors and was so intent on achieving its nuclear goal that no matter what the West did, Iran would get the bomb, and any attempt to disrupt it militarily or through tough sanctions would go badly for the West. He offered his analysis that "Iran is very different from Iraq; if the "Murshid" orders his people to do something (like

revenge attacks across the Gulf, striking American interests as well as Arab), they will do it, to a person."

14. (C) Polcounselor separately alluded to USG concerns raised reftel during a January 31 meeting with MFA Asia Department Counselor Rashid Al-Hajri during a January read-out on Iranian Speaker Ali Larijani's visit last week to Kuwait (Ref C and septel). Al-Hajri, in response, delivered the GoK's standard (and not particularly convincing) talking points on this issue, emphasizing the GOK's "clear and unchanging position" that Iran must abide by UN and IAEA safeguards on its nuclear program and opposes any military options in the Gulf. Al-Hajri said GOK officials invariably stress these points in meetings with Iranian counterparts; at the same time, Kuwait is obliged to conduct bilateral relations on a variety of issues with its larger neighbor.

15. (C) Comment: Kuwaitis at all levels are deeply worried about the nuclear ambitions of their much larger neighbor, but are unsure how to respond. They worry that an Iran emboldened by a nuclear arsenal would assert greater regional hegemony at the expense of Kuwaiti interests, and would be more inclined to meddle in Kuwaiti internal affairs given the thirty percent of the nation that is Shi'a. However, Kuwaitis are equally concerned about military pre-emption, which they believe would not prove decisive and would lead Iran to lash out at US interests in the Gulf (including US military facilities in Kuwait), and against those states in the region seen as allied with the US. Kuwait's current limited engagement with Iran appears to be motivated by a desire to try to lower regional tensions (particularly between Iran and Saudi Arabia), with Kuwait able to distance

itself from the message by emphasizing that it is speaking on behalf of the GCC in its capacity as GCC chair for 2010.

16. (U) Comment continued: At the same time, Kuwait more parochially is seeking a way forward to secure Iranian agreement to tap gas reserves in the disputed continental shelf (Kuwait needs the gas, which it has little of domestically, to fuel more and cleaner power plants to meet growing electricity demand). The careful balancing act Kuwait is playing was perhaps best exemplified during the visit last week of Iranian parliamentary Speaker Larijani -- his warning that GCC states should not allow their territory to be used by the US to launch attacks against Iran was carried in most local papers on the front page, above the fold, with prominent coverage given below the fold to comprehensive coverage (including photos) of the US-Kuwait military exercise "Eager Mace." Kuwait's nuanced approach requires careful footwork, but PM Nasser Mohammed Al Sabah, former dean of Tehran's diplomatic corps and self-described Iran expert, apparently feels confident he is up to the task -- and doesn't need much help from the US with the choreography. End Comment.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
visit Kuwait's Classified Website at:

<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa> it

JONES